

4.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The following provides a general description of the environmental setting of the proposed project site and surrounding area. Information developed for the setting was established at the time of release of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) (February 17, 2012) (Appendix A of this EIR). Please refer to Sections 5.1 through 5.15 for a detailed description of the environmental setting as it relates to each environmental topic analyzed in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Project Location, Surrounding Land Uses and Site Characteristics

Figure 4-1 presents an aerial photo of the project area showing the location of the project site and the surrounding land uses. The Quarry Creek Master Plan area is located in the northeast portion of the City of Carlsbad, approximately 0.25 miles west of College Boulevard, on the south side of State Route 78 (SR-78). The project site comprised of the 100-acre “Reclamation parcel” on the east, and the 56-acre “Panhandle parcel” on the west. Buena Vista Creek generally bisects the Reclamation parcel, and runs northerly (off-site) of the Panhandle parcel. The segment of Marron Road that is located within the limits of the City of Oceanside currently ends at the Quarry Creek Plaza shopping center to the east. Haymar Drive accesses the project site as a frontage road, on the south side of SR-78.

As shown on Figure 4-1, the project site is located within an “urbanized” area (California Environmental Quality Act [CEQA] §21071) generally surrounded by highway routes, commercial, residential, and open space land uses. The Quarry Creek Plaza shopping center and an automotive dealership are immediately east of the project site. The Calavera Hills residential neighborhood, as well as open space associated with the City’s HMP Hardline Preserve, is located immediately south of the project site. SR-78 and residential uses are located to the north of the project site. The Panhandle parcel of the project site is bordered on the west and north by the Buena Vista Creek Ecological Reserve, which is owned by the California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). The Marron Adobe is located to the west of the Reclamation parcel and north of the Panhandle parcel. El Salto Falls is located at the eastern boundary of the project site. The existing General Plan land use designations for the project site are low-medium density residential and open space. The existing designations are currently in conflict with the December 23, 2009 adoption of the updated City of Carlsbad 2005-2010 General Plan Housing Element policies and subsequent July 2011 actions that modify the land uses on the Reclamation parcel to high- and medium-high residential densities.

The project site is characterized by a significant amount of topographic relief. Elevations within the project site range from approximately 80 feet above mean sea level (AMSL) at the Buena Vista Creek wetlands, in the north central corner of the project site, to approximately 320 feet AMSL at the southeastern property line. The southern portion of the project site contains a steep north-facing cut slope as a result of previous mining activities. Buena Vista Creek runs east to west through the center of the Reclamation parcel, which widens to wetlands habitat in the north-central area of the project site. The Panhandle parcel consists of an east-west trending ridge, and a parallel tributary stream course/valley that drains the Calavera Hills neighborhoods from the south.

The majority of the Reclamation parcel has been disturbed as a result of previous aggregate mining operations. However, sensitive vegetation communities are located on-site, the majority of which are in areas identified in the City of Carlsbad’s HMP Hardline Preserve Area. These Hardline Preserve Areas connect with existing HMP Hardline Preserve Areas to the south and west of the project site. Sensitive vegetation communities include natural southern riparian woodlands, riparian forest, southern willow scrub forest, mule fat scrub, freshwater marsh, coastal sage scrub, southern mixed chaparral, native

grasslands, non-native grasslands, eucalyptus woodlands, non-native vegetation, disturbed habitat, and developed land. The on-site natural communities primarily surround Buena Vista Creek and the wetlands, as well as a large area of steep slopes on the southern portion of the project site.

With respect to air quality, the project site is located in the northwestern coastal portion of the San Diego Air Basin (SDAB). The SDAB continues to have a transitional-attainment status of federal standards for ozone. The SDAB is either in attainment or unclassified for federal standards of carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, particulate matter (less than 10 microns), and lead. San Diego County areas in general are also in attainment of state air quality standards for all pollutants with the exception of ozone and particulate matter (less than 10 microns).

The primary noise source in the vicinity of the project site is traffic noise generated from vehicles traveling on SR-78, located to the north of the site.

History of the Project Area

Cultural Setting

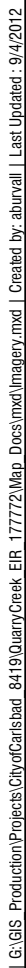
Historically, the project site was within the territory of the native Luiseño Indians. This Luiseño territory generally extended along the coast from Agua Hedionda Creek in Carlsbad and to the southwest to Aliso Creek at the southern limits of present Orange County. This territory extended east as far as Palomar Mountain. Archaeological sites representing the Luiseño people have been recorded along the Buena Vista Creek drainage in the project site area.

In 1839, Juan Maria Romuldo Marron applied for a land grant of 13,011 acres that became known as Rancho Agua Hedionda. The Quarry Creek Master Plan area and the Buena Vista Valley are located at the northernmost end of this land grant. The land grant was deeded to Juan Maria Romuldo Marron in 1842 and his brother Silvestre Marron was charged with managing the land. Buena Vista Valley eventually became known as Marron Canyon. The Marron Adobe and two California pepper trees remain in the area, located to the west of the Reclamation parcel, north of the Panhandle parcel, and immediately south of SR-78.

In 1947, Fred Hayes, grandson of Sylvestre Marron, restored the home, which became known as the Marron-Hayes Adobe. This house currently retains much of its appearance from the 1947 remodel. The house has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historical Places (NRHP) and the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR).

Aggregate Mining and Processing Activities

In 1973, the Marron family sold the 156-acre project site to the South Coast Material Company. The South Coast Material Company conducted mining operations on the Reclamation parcel between 1961 and 1995. Since 1991, the project site has been owned and the quarry operated by Hanson Aggregates. Historically, quarry mining operations on the Reclamation parcel included three industrial operations: (1) quarrying of the hard rock material from the site; (2) the manufacturing of asphalt and concrete products; and (3) reclamation work. All quarrying activities on the property ceased in 1995.



In compliance with the Surface Mining and Recovery Act of 1975 (SMARA), a Reclamation Plan for the Reclamation parcel was adopted by the State Mining and Geology Board in 1991. Under SMARA, all mining operations are required to have an adopted Reclamation Plan that will render the mining site usable per the local zoning and General Plan land use designations. The approved 1991 Reclamation Plan adopted a revised alignment for Buena Vista Creek through the project site. In 2001, the 1991 Reclamation Plan was revised and included a condition that Buena Vista Creek be retained within its current alignment and the remnants of El Salto Falls be preserved in place.

El Salto Falls was listed in 2001 with the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) as a sacred site. The Reclamation Plan was revised again and adopted in July, 2010. The adopted Reclamation Plan is identified as “Refined Alternative 3” in the *Former South Coast Quarry Amended Reclamation Plan Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report* (State Clearinghouse [SCH] #2005111124). Figure 4-2 depicts the Amended Reclamation Plan for Refined Alternative 3, as approved in its final form by the City of Oceanside. The 2010 Reclamation Plan preserves the natural Buena Vista Creek alignment and culturally sensitive El Salto Falls. The falls serves as a gathering place and site of sacred ritual and worship by the Luiseño Indians.

Prior to reclamation activity, the on-site portion of Buena Vista Creek was highly degraded, characterized as a relatively steep-sloped incised channel. The historic width of the channel within the Reclamation parcel was less than 100 feet in width (generally 50 to 80 feet). Under the Refined Alternative 3, the overall channel width, which includes bottom width and overbank terraces, is 194 feet. The channel cross-section includes a low-flow channel, an expanded channel including a riparian zone, an overbank terrace, a transition zone and an upland zone. Rock drop structures have been placed in the channel bottom to control 100-year flow velocities. Under the Reclamation Plan, the channel is being restored with wetland and upland vegetation.

Contaminated Soils Remediation

The previous use of the Reclamation parcel for quarry operations involved the use and storage of hazardous materials that ultimately left a portion of this parcel with residual petroleum hydrocarbon soil and groundwater contamination. During removal of fuel tanks on the site in 1997, diesel and gasoline impacted soil was detected and an ongoing program of environmental investigation and remediation was begun by 1998. The site remediation activities have been overseen by the San Diego County Department of Environmental Health (DEH) under the Local Oversight Program, Case Number H02509-001, and are also subject to Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) Order No. R9-2002-0342. Hazardous materials remediation for the Reclamation parcel, pursuant to the approved “closure” plan by the DEH, is anticipated to be completed in late 2012.

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